1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
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Silwa

855 854 be explained as a result of the cultural pressure for a large family, the achievement of which is threatened by the high death rate among children. Parents feel that they have done their duty towards the child's care immediately he is able to walk and talk, and the rest of his development is left to God's protection. Moreover, the relatively low mortality rate amongst sucklings in Silwa is due to the fact that they depend mainly upon their mother's milk, while after weaning, adult food is given to the [196] children which cannot be an adequate substitute for the mother's milk because of its unsuitability and deficiency. Yet it must be noted here that 195 children in the province of Aswan are very much undernourished compared with the normal healthy development of other more fortunate children. They are ten centimetres (about 4 inches) less in height, and five kilograms (about 12 pounds) less in weight, and the percentage of haemoglobin in their blood is only 40 per cent.[1]

857 A third important characteristic of this period of childhood is the integration of the boy or the girl with the play group and age mates. About the age of three, the child's attachment to his mother is expected to be over, [866] and this means gradually increasing its contacts with its age group outside the household, and thus the child directs itself, first to its elder siblings and relatives, and then gradually to other children in its play activities. The child may be led by hand or straddled on the shoulder by an older sister to watch other children playing, or taken to defaecate where other children do the same thing. The authority of the older sibling plays a dominant 857 593 part in shaping the child's attitudes from now onwards. The older sisters or brothers act as guardians for their younger siblings; they soothe them when they cry, protect them from interference from other boys or girls. While older boys are playing, one might hear one of them saying: 'Your brother is crying, and I'll have nothing to do with him, you are his brother and you should quieten him.' It is accepted that if the older brothers and sisters are about, other boys and girls hardly ever interfere with the younger siblings for fear of being blamed for their crying or injury. It must be pointed out here that boys are usually less burdened with the care of their younger brothers compared with girls, and this is probably one of the reasons that gives the boys freer scope for movement and rough play.

The younger boys and girls form the fringe of their older siblings' play-groups, but gradually they start to form their own groups, and imitate their elders. One finds that younger boys of five or six might be playing with their older brothers in one game, but one hardly finds boys of eight or nine in the same play group as their older brothers of the age of twelve, thirteen or fourteen. On the whole, siblings after the age of seven or eight usually prefer to go to different places for their games, and till that age, the basis of play is blood relationship and neighbourhood. A stranger boy who wants to join other children in their play is either introduced to the

[1] Ministry of Health Statistics quoted by M. Khattab, in a speech in the Upper House of Parliament, in *Al-Ahram* (Egyptian daily paper), 26 December 1940.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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obtains for his business, probably refrained from examining the statement as to age made by the girl's parents.

The childbearing age lasts over a long period, for girls mature early, and it is a common thing in Egypt for a woman of fifty to give birth to a child. From an economic point of view it is probably an advantage that so many of the children die, for otherwise the country would soon become over-populated. What is so desirable is that those who do survive should be brought up in healthier surroundings, both moral and physical, and without the unnecessary suffering inflicted upon them by the ignorance of the mothers.

FIG. 17. YOUNG GIRL DRESSED UP TO ATTRACT A HUSBAND

In spite of the frequently indecent talk on sexual matters, there is a strict moral code, especially with regard to unmarried girls, the infringement of which often entails a terrible punishment. This seems somewhat unfair on the girls, considering the atmosphere in which they are brought up. If a girl has misconducted herself before marriage, and is discovered at marriage to be unchaste, the disgrace to her family is looked upon as such a terrible one that her own parents will often kill her, sometimes taking the unfortunate child—for she is hardly more than a child—into the desert, and there dispatching her, usually, I

9: Klunzinger D-5 (1863-1875) 1878
MR13 Fellahin MR13
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pieces on a tray, a taper being stuck on every piece. The women move through the house in procession to an accompaniment of singing, trilling, and kettle-drum playing, the boy who is the occasion of the festival behind the henna tray. The mother and the singing-girls receive presents, the boy has a piece of the henna-paste tied into the hollow of his hand, the assembled women do the same for themselves, and all awake next morning with brownish-red palms. 527 304 824 [431]

On the day of the circumcision itself, the boy, who is now five to ten years old, is dressed in a new and costly garment, a Cashmere shawl, or it may be a woman's robe (perhaps as a sign that up to this time he has belonged to the harem), a gold-embroidered woman's cap is placed on his head, he is mounted on a horse, and rides in grand procession accompanied by musical instruments round the town. In the evening there is great feasting in his parent's house. Next morning, or on the evening after the procession, the barber performs the circumcision with a razor, an operation customary even among the ancient Egyptians. By it the boy becomes clean, and capable of performing religious exercises, of praying and entering the mosque; this religious act is, therefore, in some respects analogous to the Christian rite of confirmation. 304 [292] [783]

The circumcision of girls is performed privately, and may be guessed to have taken place when, on a customary day, girls in red holiday-clothes swarm about on the streets.

MARRIAGE.

As in the case of circumcision, the preparations for a marriage, in the shape of domestic entertainments and ceremonies, commence months before. As soon as a son exhibits the first signs of puberty his parents think of providing him with a wife. In opposition to the views of other peoples these marriages of children are considered very healthy and judicious throughout the East, even among the Christians. The parents justly believe that they thus provide for the well-being of their children. Long before puberty, which follows in their twelfth or fourteenth year, or still earlier, all the girls are given 527 582 [584] [145]

9: Klunzinger D-5 (1863-1875) 1878
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582 away, that is, are arranged to marry some boy or other, and
[145] as soon as both arrive at puberty they are married. Men marry as a rule from their fifteenth to their eighteenth year. These early marriages appear to have by no means a degenerating influence upon the race, but on the contrary a beneficial one, the marriages being, with few exceptions, fruitful and happy, and the women being not so liable to be attacked with female ailments, such as chlorosis, hysteria, and nervous weakness. The same principles are applied also in the case of the domestic animals.

In a learned treatise by a modern Arabic physician who studied in Europe it is maintained, however, that for the men of his country the age of eighteen to twenty, for the women of sixteen, is the most suitable. The main consideration relative to early marriages, the bread question, is regarded by the Oriental only as of secondary importance, he only thinks of it when he is hungry. So long as the son is still too young
[581] the father provides for the maintenance of him and his family, when he is old enough he earns his daily bread himself, and when the father grows old the son in turn provides for him.

584 When their young son wishes to have a wife the father and mother set out in quest of a bride for him; by the latter the bath is often selected for this purpose, and her sober reason often brings more suitable pairs together than the impulses of the heart. Both young people have also to acquiesce in the arrangement, they cannot be forced, and the marriage is not valid until on the "uncovering and unveiling" the pair feel a mutual pleasure; but at this age a refusal is rare, and in case of after disillusion the marriage may be easily dissolved on either side. The search for a bride is generally quite unnecessary, as in two-thirds of the cases it has been previously settled that the young fellow is to marry his female cousin, and if he has none, more distant relations are applied
582 to, and lastly strangers. If these marriages of cousins had really such a prejudicial effect upon a race as they are usually represented to have it must have been long ago noticed in Egypt; its inhabitants, however, show no inferiority either from a physical or an intellectual point of view. The low